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Bluewater Action Research Network in an international context. In: Bluewater  
Action Research Network (BARN) symposium: Sharing our Knowledge, 8 April  
2016, Central Office, North Chesley, Ontario, Canada. (Unpublished)

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## **Bluewater Action Research Network In An International Context**

A presentation by Jack Whitehead of the University of Cumbria, UK, to the Bluewater Action Research Network Symposium on Sharing Our Knowledge on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at the Central Office, North Chesley, Ontario, Canada.

**13:35 minute video introduction at:**



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r\\_BNbIVQL4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r_BNbIVQL4)

### **Abstract**

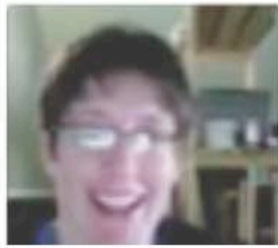
The presentation begins by placing the Bluewater Action Research Network (BARN) in the International Context of the Town Hall Meeting of the Action Research Network (ARNA) of the Americas Conference in Toronto on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015. The Meeting included the living-poster of BARN, presented in the Town Hall meeting convened by Jacqueline Delong (2015). The living-posters at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage061115.pdf> direct attention to Living Theory research in the generation and sharing of individuals' explanations of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understandings.

The presentations in this Symposium, with their foci on I and/or we, are then contrasted with the titles of contributors to a 2016 text on Academic Autoethnographies from international contexts. The contrast includes an autoethnographic focus on cultural influences in using insights from the methodologies of Autoethnography, Narrative Research, Self-study Research and Action Research in the creation of the living-methodologies and theories of members of BARN.

The conclusion is in the form of an advocacy for the creation of partnerships between Universities and professional accrediting agencies to offer degrees that recognize the embodied knowledge of master and doctor educators that can enhance the influence of BARN as a social movement in an international context.

- 1) Placing BARN in the International Context of the Town Hall Meeting of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) Conference on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015 within the living-posters at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage061115.pdf> with the living-poster below:

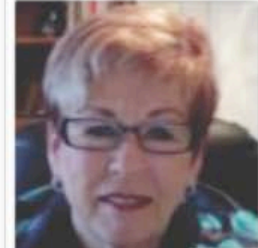
For live links click on <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/1Canada2704.pdf>



Cathy Griffin



Liz Campbell



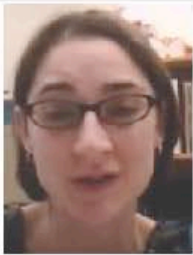
Jackie Delong



Kelly Hanson



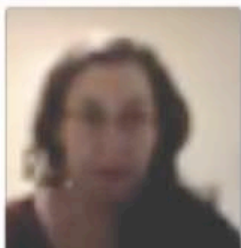
Sabre Cherkowski



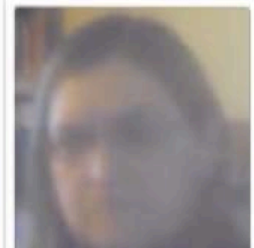
Michelle Cunningham



Avis Daigarno



Krystal Damm



Cathryn Smith

We are a group of educational researchers working in Ontario, Canada.

Our purpose is to create meaningful, relevant, authentic and sustainable professional development for practitioners that can be directly transferred to the classroom to create similar learning opportunities for students. We use action-reflection and data-driven self-directed inquiry in a collaborative community.

Some of our members were part of the ARNA planning group, some are here and have posters. Find out more from their poster and by visiting [our virtual mentor spaces](#).

BLUE WATER ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK  
BARN

**a) ARNA's international recognition of BARN inquiries**

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aran/aranposters/CathyAvis050515.pdf>

**2015**



Cathy Griffin, Canada

The ARNA Award for Promising Young Researcher is presented to Cathy Griffin. Cathy is from the Bluewater District School Board in Ontario and has been working tirelessly with her colleagues to improve teaching and learning through action research colleagues. Since earning her Master of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Brock University in 2011, she has written papers and made presentations with Jack Whitehead, Liz Campbell, and Jacqueline Delong, among others. She is creator of the [Bluewater Action Research Network](#), ten of whose members presented their action research at the 2015 ARNA conference. Her [keynote address](#) to the Teacher Learning and Leading Program provides more details about her work.

**b) Sustaining generative conversations in BARN through SKYPE**

In May 2015 Jacqueline and I came to respond to the writings of members of BARN. As we arrived the Teachers Unions announced that their members would be withdrawing from Professional Development activities! The teachers' action having ended we are back a year later to resume our responses. During the year and in our planning for the ARNA conference we sustained our motivation through our generative SKYPE conversations and viewing video-clips from previous BARN gatherings.







I am looking forward to listening to and reading your contributions to the Symposium with your foci on questions that are directed to improving your practice. Before you make your presentations I want to introduce the idea of autoethnography to those who have yet to encounter the idea because of its emphasis on acknowledging cultural influences in what we do and think. As I respond to your contributions I shall highlight the importance of cultural influence in explanations of our educational influences in learning.

## 2) Contrasting Living Theory research with Autoethnographies and other methodologies

What I now want to do is to contrast the presentations to the Symposium on 'Sharing our Knowledge' with the contributions to the text on 'Academic Autoethnographies: Inside Teaching in Higher Education' (Pillay, Naicker and Pithouse-Morgan 2016). The editors of Academic Autoethnographies included special recognition of the influence of Claudia Mitchell. I mention this because Claudia is the James McGill Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University, one of your Canadian Universities.

The strength of all of your contributions to this Symposium is your focus on I and/or we in your questions and your willingness to explain your educational influences in your own learning and in the learning of others in creating your own living-educational-theories. The strength of the contributions to Academic Autoethnographies is that they focus on the influence of culture in the learning of the contributors. They also acknowledge ideas from narrative research, self-study research and action research. I am suggesting that you could strengthen your contributions to the global professional knowledge-base of education by including your understandings of cultural influences in your learning and your influence in the learning of the cultures that help to constitute the social formations that influence your practice and understandings. This focus on culture is consistent with Jacqueline Delong's (2002) focus on contributing to and sustaining a culture of inquiry in the Grand Erie District School Board in Ontario<sup>1</sup>. I am suggesting below that the significance of the research of the contributors to Academic Autoethnographies would be enhanced by focusing on the kind of I/we questions that you are asking with an emphasis on explaining educational influences in one's own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence practice and understanding.

**a) Contributions to the Symposium on Sharing our Knowledge with a focus on I and/or we in the questions:**

Laurel Sanderson and Lindsay Baker - How can we (teachers and students) safely learn to express / be our true self using authentic communication?
Tawnya Schlosser and Jane Franken - How do we invite Kindergarten students to reflect on and communicate their learning?
Cathy Griffin, Bradley Clarke, Melissa Juniper - As a collaborative team of students and educators: How might we change our practice as learners and educators to positively influence student achievement in the comprehension and communication of Mathematical concepts?
Colleen Wolski and Jacqueline Johnston - We are investigating how we can improve our relationship with classroom co-workers so that we can create a safe learning environment where everyone feels they can be their authentic self.
Jacqueline Hofmann - Will teaching students to read with musicality and rhythm in their voices strengthen their ability to become more fluent readers?
Beth Fischer - How do I model self-care and mindfulness so that students improve?
Dorothy Oberle - How can I modify the practices I used with intermediate students to address the social needs of my primary student to improve student achievement? (More specifically: rules of social engagement)
Kelly McDougall - How do I embed the growth mindset in my lessons so that it is relevant, meaningful and impactful for my students?
Janice Daize - How can I improve my practice so that my contributions to the school environment promote inclusivity and considerations for the academic and social needs of students of the Low German culture within our student population?
Amy McCauley-Hoare, Kim Kearns, and Susan Potter - We want to know, through the use of success criteria, checklists, and anchor charts, can we teach our students specific strategies that will help them accurately assess their own work and identify areas for growth? In addition, we want to explore how these strategies affect students' self-concepts, self-confidence, and mindsets as learners.

**b) Contrasting the above titles with the titles of the contributions to Academic Autoethnography - with no I or we in the titles. Makhanya and Timm do include my in their titles and Mitchell's question includes 'our'.**

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<sup>1</sup> See the details of the Bluewater Master's Cohort and the Brantford Master's Cohort at

Daisy Pillay, Inanathen Naicker and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan - Writing Academic Autoethnographies: Imagination, Serendipity and Creative Interactions.
Liz Harrison - A Tinker's Quest: Embarking on an Autoethnographic Journey in Learning "Doctoralness".
Thelma Rosenberg - Conversations and the Cultivation of Self-Understanding.
Chris de Beer - Creative Self-Awareness: Conversations, Reflections and Realisations.
Lasse Reinikainen and Heléne Zetterström Dahlqvist - Curating an Exhibition in a University Setting: An Autoethnographic Study of an Autoethnographic Work.
Sizakele Makhanya - My Mother, My Mentor: Valuing My Mother's Educational Influence
Delysia Norelle Timm - From Exclusion through Inclusion to Being in My Element: Becoming a Higher Education Teacher across the Apartheid-Democratic Interface
Lesley Wood - Transforming Ideas of Research, Practice and Professional Development in a Faculty of Education: An Autoethnographic Study.
Robert J. Balfour - The (In)Visible Gay in Academic Leadership: Implications for Reimagining Inclusion and Transformation in South Africa.
Bert Olivier - Information Conceptual Mediation of Experience in Higher Education.
Rose Richards - Subject to Interpretation: Autoethnography and the Ethics of Writing about the Embodied Self.
Claudia Mitchell - Autoethnography as a Wide-Angle Lens on Looking (Inward and Outward): What Difference Can This Make to Our Teaching?

I have emphasized the importance of your I and/or we questions in your educational enquiries because of my belief that sharing such enquiries in international contexts could prevent researchers from losing a connection with the expression of the embodied values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. I now want to focus on enhancing such international influences of BARN through partnerships that focus on accrediting your embodied knowledge as master and doctor educators.

## **2) Enhancing the educational influence of the Bluewater Action Research Network in an international context through partnerships to accredit the knowledge of master and doctor educators.**

One way I am suggesting that we could all enhance our contributions to both improving practice and generating educational knowledge is through contributing your living-theories to the public sharing of the resources posted in Action Research Canada at <http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/> and in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) at <http://ejolts.net><sup>2</sup>. These resources already include the Brantford Master's Cohorts of 2009 and 2012, the Bluewater Master's Cohort and 8 Volumes of Passion in Professional Practice.

I am also suggesting that we should be supporting the creation of partnerships between universities and other accrediting agencies of professional knowledge and learning for the accrediting of your educational knowledge as master and doctor educators (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016). Here are two suggestions that you might build on in your particular contexts.

### **a) The first suggestion draws attention to a co-created masters unit offered in 1999 at Bishops University in Quebec to show the kind of masters programme that could accredit your knowledge as that of a master educator.**

The programme was dedicated to Fran Halliday, an inspiring teacher educator and research who did much to promote the teacher-researcher movement before her untimely death. It included self-study, narrative research and action research in the creation of the participant's living-educational-theories.

<sup>2</sup> See the December 2013 issue of EJOLTS at <http://ejolts.net/node/209> with contributions from Liz Campbell, Cathy Griffin, Jacqueline Delong and Jack Whitehead.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bishops/bish99.pdf>

One of the most impressive pieces of educational learning through masters writing came from Tina Jacklin, a teacher in her first year of teaching. Tina received the support of some 8 other participants and moved through 5 drafts to a completed masters unit, at the end of the two week programme. You access the 5 drafts and the final writings at:


<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/bishops/tjpaperall.pdf>

Here is the final paragraph of Tina's fifth draft that focuses on values that I think we will all recognize as carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity:

JoAnne and I have defined a caring individual as someone who moves away from the self or egocentricism and toward an awareness of others' feelings, needs, and problems. We want the students to recognize the whole picture that they are a part of and the reasons behind behaviour. We want them to think about how they would feel in another person's situation before making judgments about them.

We believe we will have evidence of a caring individual from the students' own reflective journal and pictorial representations of caring, survey questions from both students and parents, responses to literature, video tapes and pictures of students in the class, parent observations of the classroom and stories which the students create to depict kindness.

- b) **The second suggestion is a DRAFT suggestion being worked on by Marie Huxtable and myself as Visiting Research Fellow and Visiting Professor at the University of Cumbria, with Pete Boyd the Professor of Professional Learning at the University of Cumbria, for a single 30 credit module on Improving Practice with Living Theory research:**

Refer to guidance notes for help completing template			
Module Title - Improving Practice with Living Theory research			
Module Code:		CAT credits:	30
Mode(s) of delivery:	Distance learning	NQF Level:	7
Owning Department:	Education	Module Leader:	Marie Huxtable & Jack Whitehead
Aims of the Module			
The aim of this module is to critically and creatively examine a range of perspectives and theoretical frameworks relevant to your field of practice and use these to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of your efforts to improve your practice professionally. You will be supported to create a valid account of your living-educational-theory. Your living-educational-theory is your values-based explanation of your educational influence in your own learning, the learning of others, and the learning of social formations within which you live and work.			

<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b>	
On successful completion, you will be able to:	
1.	Engage critically and creatively with literature, experience and knowledge from other sources, to inform and develop your inquiry;
2.	Develop critical understanding of a range of research methodologies and methods useful in practitioner research, and justify the approach for your own study;
3.	clarify the meanings of embodied expressions of the values you use to explain your own



educational influences in learning by analysing
4. Understand and improve your practice by producing a validated multi-media narrative account of your living-educational-theory.

<b>Indicative Module Content</b>
<p><b>The module will address the following issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living Theory research methodology</li> <li>• Key characteristics of research approaches such as Auto-ethnography, Action Research, Narrative Inquiry, Grounded Theory, Case Study and Phenomenology</li> <li>• Understandings of values, beliefs, knowledge, and ethics and implications for practitioner-research</li> <li>• Sociocultural perspectives of the wider context in which your practice is located</li> </ul>

Indicative Student Workload (hours)	
Choose	
Choose	
Choose	
Choose	

<b>Formative Assessment –</b>
Formative assessment provides an opportunity for you to receive feedback on work as part of your learning for the module. Formative work does not have marks awarded that contribute to the final module mark.
A draft explanation of educational influences in learning in the enquiry, ‘How do I improve what I am doing in my professional practice’ will be subjected to validation group responses that are intended to strengthen the comprehensibility, the evidence, the sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings and the clarity of the explanatory values in the explanation. A validation group is formed with between 3-8 peers.

<b>Summative Assessment –</b>					
Summative assessment provides the opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have met the learning outcomes for the module.					
	<b>Size of the assessment</b>	<b>ILOs assessed</b>	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Is anonymous marking possible?</b>	<b>Core element?*</b>
Written assignment	3500 to 4500 words	ALL	100%	Yes	Yes
Choose				Choose	Choose
Brief description of set exercise (if appropriate)	Participants will be required to undertake a small-scale Living Theory research project.				

- By default, your final module grade will be an aggregated mark. However, if this box is marked 'yes,' then you *must* successfully pass this item of assessment regardless of the overall aggregated mark.

### Reassessment

Reassessment in the failed component(s) will be undertaken as stated in the Academic Regulations.

### Indicative Core Bibliography

Gifted Education International 32(1) Educators creating a knowledge-base of a profession of educators. London; Sage.

Huxtable, M. (2006) How can I improve my practice through 'walking the talk' and 'dealing with doorsteps'? MA educational enquiry unit, University of Bath. Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/tuesdayma/mhma06.pdf>

Laidlaw, M. (2015) How I am trying to lead the best possible life: Towards a more helpful framing of my practice. Educational Journal of Living Theories 8(2) 32-75. Retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016 from <http://ejolts.net/node/261>

Whitehead, J. (2015) The Practice of Helping Students to Find Their First Person Voice in Creating Living-Theories for Education, pp. 247-255 in Bradbury, H. (Ed) (2015) The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, Third Edition, London; Sage.

### Additional Notes

The course uses a virtual learning environment to provide structured online resources to guide independent study, interactive online learning within a tutorial group of other practitioners, access to online library resources, access to student support, and proactive tutoring by a university lecturer.

To be eligible to study this module you should want to improve your educational practice professionally and be willing to research your practice and share your learning and knowledge with others.

I have also included, as an Appendix, a draft of a full Living Theory masters programme to show you what I have in mind for the accreditation of the embodied knowledge of master educators.

### Interim Conclusion

What follows this presentation will provide me with the interim conclusion as the Symposium looks ahead at what BARN participants now intend to do in enhancing the educational influences of the network in local, regional, national and global contexts.

### References

Delong, J. (2015) 2015 ARNA Symposia Session/Town Hall Meeting Proposal Joint Action - Learning with and from one another. Retrieved 6 April 2016 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/ARNA2015TownHallProposal090215.pdf>

Pillay, D., Naicker, I. & Pithouse-Morgan, K. (Eds.) (2016). Academic Autoethnography: Inside Teaching in Higher Education Rotterdam; Sense Publishers.

Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2016) Creating a profession of educators with the living-theories of master and doctor educators. Gifted Education International, 32(1) 6-25. For the prepublication contents of this issue see <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/gei2015/geicontents2016.pdf>

## APPENDIX

### **A DRAFT suggestion discussed with colleagues at the University of Cumbria on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

Living Theory Masters for professional educational-practitioners.

This Masters can serve as a qualification for a professional educational-practitioner, practicing in various fields - schools, business etc. Professional educational-practitioners, in addition to contributing to their field or discipline (such as school or university teaching, Health Visiting, Business, Engineering, Mathematics...), have a responsibility to continually research their educational practice to improve it. In the process they express their responsibility as a professional to draw on and contribute, as knowledge creators, to evolving an educational knowledge base.

In the process of researching as a Living Theory researcher you will create and offer valid knowledge of your field or discipline, your educational practice and of your self and of self in and of the world. The self-studied is not as a narcissistic exercise or a form of therapy. It is a study of embodied expressions of your ontological and social values, which enable you to understand how you are in and of the world in the act of trying to improve it.

Through this Living Theory Masters programme you will learn to research questions of the form, 'how can I improve what I am doing and contribute to the flourishing of humanity?' As you create valid values-based accounts of your educational influences in your own learning, the learning of others and the social formations you live and work in, you will test your implicit claim to know your practice, recognise where you are living a contradiction and where your values are denied in your context, and how you may improve things.

The researcher will, through the first three modules, focus in turn on producing valid values-based accounts of their educational influence in own learning, the learning of others, the learning of a social formations that they live and work in. The fourth module will focus on extending knowledge of research methodologies and methods the researcher has learned about and used in the previous three modules. The dissertation will comprise a deeper and more extended account by the researcher of their living-theory which builds on the preceding research and includes an account of the researcher's living-theory methodology, research methods and data collection.

#### What this course can lead to

The complete Living Theory Masters for professional educational-practitioners comprises four modules, each attracting 30 M-level credits and a dissertation attracting 60 M-level credits.

Each module is designed to enable you to extend your knowledge and experience as an educational researcher and complete the Living Theory Masters for professional educational-practitioners. Should you choose you can gain experience of M-level study by completing one or more modules as part of your continuing professional development (CPD) without fully committing to an MA. This Masters could provide a basis for a Living Theory research doctorate.

#### Resources and facilities

The course uses a virtual learning environment to provide structured online resources to guide independent study, interactive online learning within a tutorial group of other practitioners, access to online library resources, access to student support, and proactive tutoring by a university lecturer.

#### Module 1 course summary

You will critically and creatively examine a range of perspectives and theoretical frameworks relevant to your field of practice and use these to inform the design,

implementation and evaluation of your efforts to improve your practice professionally. You will be supported in creating a valid account of your educational influence in your own learning.

By the end of this module, you will have:

- Undertaken an enquiry into your educational practice to improve it and produced a valid account of your explanation of your educational influence in your own learning;
- Made critical and creative use of literature, experience and knowledge from other sources, to inform and develop your enquiry;
- Learned what distinguishes education and educational research, and ontological and social values;
- Learned about and used two research methods such as Action Research and Narrative Enquiry, as appropriate to your Living Theory research;
- Learned about and used a qualitative and quantitative method of data collection;
- Critiqued your own research to improve it.

#### Module 2 course summary

You will critically and creatively examine a range of perspectives and theoretical frameworks relevant to your field of practice and use these to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of your efforts to improve your practice professionally. You will be supported in creating a valid account of your educational influence in your own learning.

By the end of this module, you will have:

- Undertaken an enquiry into your educational practice to improve it and produced a valid multimedia account of your explanation of your educational influence in the learning of your students/pupils and/or others, such as your colleagues or people in your community;
- Made critical and creative use of literature, experience and knowledge from other sources, to inform and develop your enquiry;
- Developed your approach to data collection and analysis as evidence of your values-based practice in your explanation of your educational influence;
- Learned about and used two research methods such as Autoethnography and Narrative Enquiry, as appropriate to your Living Theory research;
- Critiqued your own and another student's research to improve it.

#### Module 3 course summary

You will critically and creatively examine a range of perspectives and theoretical frameworks relevant to your field of practice and use these to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of your efforts to improve your practice professionally. You will be supported in creating a valid account of your educational influence in your own learning.

By the end of this module, you will have:

- Undertaken an enquiry into your educational practice to improve it and produced a valid multimedia account of your explanation of your educational influence in the learning of a social formation in which you live and work, such as your workplace or community;

- Made critical and creative use of literature, experience and knowledge from other sources, to inform and develop your enquiry;
- Learned about 'explanations', 'standards of judgment', 'units of appraisal', 'rigour' and 'validity' and used them to strengthen your account;
- Learned about and used two research methods such as Case Study, Grounded Theory, Phenomenology, as appropriate to your Living Theory research;
- Critiqued a piece of research that you have drawn on.

#### Module 4 course summary

You will critically and creatively examine and evaluate accounts of your research into your practice to improve it showing how you have developed as an educational researcher able to make an increasingly high quality academic, intellectual and scholarly contribution to an educational knowledge-base.

By the end of this module, you will have:

- Learned to distinguish between research methodology and research methods, and between common methodologies;
- Analysed, interpreted and critiqued your own findings, arguments and research;
- Produced a valid account of your learning as professional educational-researcher.
- Provided an account of your own living-theory methodology and research methods that you will be using in your dissertation

#### **Assessment**

Each module will be assessed on the basis of an academic assignment consisting of between 3,500 and 4,500 words of a multimedia narrative. Within this range, length will be negotiated between student and tutor. The assignment will be located in practice and theory. Students may attach additional material that provides evidence for the claims they make.

#### **Entry criteria**

To be eligible to study this module you should want to improve your educational practice professionally and be willing to research your practice and share your learning and knowledge with others.

#### **Assessment**

The module will be assessed on the basis of an academic assignment consisting of between 3,500 and 4,500 words of continuous prose. Within this range, length will be negotiated between student and tutor. The assignment will be located in practice and theory. Students may attach additional material which provides evidence for the claims they make.